

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 04211 231501Z

44

ACTION EB-11

INFO OCT-01 ARA-16 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00

FMC-04 INR-11 NSAE-00 RSC-01 CG-00 COA-02 DLOS-07

SWF-02 AID-20 PA-04 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-03 L-03 DRC-01

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R 231410Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1260

INFO GOV PAN CANAL

UNCLAS PANAMA 4211

EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: ETRN, PN

SUBJ: PORT CONGESTION SURCHARGE AT PANAMA

REF: STATE 148513

1. REFTEL REQUESTED REPORT ON CONDITIONS AT MAJOR PORTS IN CANAL ZONE (CZ) AND REPUBLIC OF PANAMA (RP) IN CONNECTION FILING FOR 5 PERCENT SURCHARGE BY SHIP OPERATORS IN FLORIDA/ PANAMA AND COSTA RICA RATE AGREEMENT. AS THIS RATE AGREEMENT AND SURCHARGE NOT APPLICABLE TO CZ PORTS OF CRISTOBAL AND BALBOA, AND BECAUSE PANAMA CANAL COMPANY (PC) ADVISES THAT THESE PORTS EXPERIENCING NO CONGESTION, DATA ON THESE PORTS NOT REPORTED HEREIN. SURCHARGE APPLICABLE IN PANAMA SOLELY TO LAS MINAS PORT WHICH NEAR COLON. IT IS RP'S ONLY MAJOR PORT.

2. FOLLOWING SUMMARIZES CONVERSATIONS WITH PC AND RP PORT OFFICERS WHO MADE RECENT VISITS TO LAS MINAS. PORT HAS SHORT BERTH WHICH CAN SAFELY ACCOMMODATE ONLY ONE SHIP. UNTIL RECENT MONTHS TWO SHIPS ALLOWED UNLOAD SIMULTANEOUSLY, BUT COLLISION IN PORT PROMPTED REFINERIA PANAMA (TEXACO), WHICH OWNS PORT, TO LIMIT ACCESS TO ONE SHIP. THIS DOUBLED SHIP WAITING TIME FROM 12 TO 24 HOURS, WITH DELAYS UP TO 30 HOURS.

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PAGE 02 PANAMA 04211 231501Z

NO UNLOADING CRANES OR SHELTER AVAILABLE. SHIPS MUST USE

ONBOARD CRANES OR RENT TRUCK CRANES IN COLON AREA. ONLY NARROW STRIP ALONG BERTH IS HARD SURFACED. AREA ADJACENT THIS PAVED STRIP USED FOR DEPOSITING CARGO, TRAILER/TRUCK PARK AND TRUCK TURNAROUND IS UNPAVED. IT IS BADLY POTHOLED AND OFTEN EXTREMELY MUDDY. AREA PRESENTLY IS CONGESTED WITH DISARRAY OF BUNDLED STEEL, MOTOR VEHICLES AND TRAILERS AND OTHER GENERAL CARGO AND VANS.

3. LIKELIHOOD OF EARLY IMPROVEMENTS AT LAS MINAS WHICH MIGHT ALLEVIATE CONGESTION IS IMPROBABLE. IT WAS BUILT BY TEXACO REFINERY AND INTENDED SOLELY TO MEET LATTER'S REQUIREMENTS. PANAMA GOVERNMENT (GOP) HAS IN RECENT YEARS REQUIRED TEXACO TO ALLOW PORT TO BE USED FOR GENERAL CARGO. WHILE CZ PORTS ARE BETTER SUITED FOR GENERAL CARGO, LAS MINAS IS RELIED ON MORE HEAVILY FOR RP SHIPMENTS BECAUSE PORT CHARGES AT LATTER ARE NOMINAL. IT IS NOT IN TEXACO'S INTEREST TO MAKE EXPENDITURES FOR IMPROVEMENTS OTHER THAN THOSE NEEDED TO MEET ITS REQUIREMENTS. ONLY SIGNIFICANT RECENT IMPROVEMENT WAS PAVEMENT OF PORT ACCESS ROAD.

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